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The Reagan administration is taking a cautious public stand on the Warsaw Pact's proposal for mutual cuts in defense spending, but privately officials see little chance it will lead to an East-West agreement.

Administration officials said today it was premature to comment on the proposal made public by the Soviet press agency Tass late yesterday since Washington has not yet had time to study the official text.

But it seems clear, based on private conversations with these officials, that the administration views the idea with considerable skepticism and believes it was intended to reinforce a Soviet peace image at a time when Moscow is refusing to resume negotiations on nuclear weapons reductions.

They note that Romania, which presented the proposal to North Atlantic Treaty Organization embassies in Bucharest, has played a role similar to that of West Germany on the NATO side, pressing for a speedy resumption of the arms talks.

The plan calls for token military spending cuts by all NATO and Warsaw Pact nations, a three-year freeze at the new lower levels, and negotiations for large-scale cuts later.

It also proposes simultaneous spending reductions by the four nuclear powers in the two alliances -- the Soviet Union, the United States, Britain and France -- "in proportion to the gross national products" of those countries.

Administration officials note a similar proposal was advanced at a Warsaw Pact summit last year and was included by Soviet Foreign Minister Andrei Gromyko in his speech to the East-West disarmament conference in Stockholm this January.

The major U.S. objection to mutual defense spending cuts is the extreme difficulty of verifying that East European governments, with their highly secret budget processes, are complying with any agreement.

The Soviet Union, for example, has publicly listed its annual military budget at around \$25 billion in recent years. But U.S. and NATO analysts say the true figure is as much as 10 times that.

Moscow also says defence spending accounts for around 2.7 per cent of its GNP, but most Western analysts put the figure at 14 to 16 per cent.

U.S. intelligence agencies and academic experts, moreover, have differed sharply among themselves as to the proper way to compute arms spending in a centrally planned economy where goods and services do not have clearcut dollar equivalents.

The Soviet Union, for example, fields about twice as many men and women in uniform as the United States, but it pays them much less. Thus, a budget computation based solely on Soviet pay scales would greatly underestimate the true size of its armed forces.

There are also problems over whether to use official Soviet exchange rates for the ruble, which peg it much higher than its real value compared to the dollar.

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